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24 April 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Director

SUBJECT : 24 April New York Times Article by
Leslie H. Gelb ("Hanoi Is Signaling
U.S. On Take-Over")

1. In Mr. Gelb's 24 April article there appear
the following two paragraphs:

"The officials said that while the intelligence community was telling Mr. Kissinger that the Communists would take Saigon by force, he was going on the assumption that some kind of diplomacy might be possible.

"Mr. Kissinger is said to discount the latest intelligence judgment because it almost completely reverses the position of a week ago. At that time, the estimate was that the odds were sharply against a Communist storming of Saigon. He is said to feel that the intelligence services, and particularly the Central Intelligence Agency, may be trying to protect their record in the event that the worst happens."

With respect to the second paragraph -- the allegation attributed to Dr. Kissinger that the Intelligence Community's current line that the Communists will take Saigon by force "almost completely reverses the position of a week ago" -- you ask a direct question, "did it?"

2. The short answer to your question is "no". Nor is there any shred of proof to the corollary allegation, again attributed indirectly to Dr. Kissinger, "that the intelligence services, and particularly the Central Intelligence Agency, may be trying to protect their record in the event that the worst happens." I cannot speak for DIA or other Community components, but

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such an allegation is an unwarranted slur on your associates within this building.

3. Giving Henry the benefit of the doubt, which he probably does not deserve, he may have misinterpreted or misconstrued your private memorandum of 17 April outlining a suggested course of political action. In that memorandum's paragraph 4 you comment that "certain factors might induce North Vietnam to take the political route to power without full military victory." The sentence in which this phrase appears, however, follows immediately after a lead sentence which says "At this stage, North Vietnam will prove extremely difficult to negotiate with, as momentum and time seem to favor total military victory for Hanoi." Furthermore, paragraph 4 of that 17 April memorandum was setting up an avowedly hypothetical situation under which some negotiated solution might be feasible, this in the course of outlining a possible approach even in the full knowledge that the attempt was probably fruitless. This was not an intelligence appreciation of what Hanoi was most likely to do, it was not presented as such, and it would have been virtually impossible for anyone who read what you actually said to have taken it as such. Thus Henry's memory is either faulty or deliberately selective.

4. As for actual intelligence appreciations, the briefing you gave to WSAG on the same day (17 April) that you gave him the hypothetical political action memorandum started with the following sentence: "We believe that the Communists will have overpowering forces deployed into positions for an assault on Saigon within a matter of days." (The text of that 17 April WSAG briefing is hereto appended, along with the text of your political action memorandum bearing that same date.)

5. Nothing we have said within, literally, the past week has been at variance with the line taken on 17 April. We have tried to keep abreast of a fluid situation, which we have described as fluid, during which Hanoi has modified its tactics and behavior in light

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of developing events and opportunities. If you go back as far as 4 April, there was an interagency assessment of that date (also appended) which called attention to the fact that the Communists had several options before them in their quest for total victory, of which physical assault on Saigon was only one. The memorandum made it quite clear, however, that Hanoi's purpose was to collapse the GVN as a viable political entity and not to negotiate any form of interim solution involving less than total Communist control. You could perhaps say that our current reporting is at slight variance with some of the language employed in that 4 April memo, but such a thesis could not be sustained without some highly selective, out-of-context quotations. What your associates did on 4 April was line out several courses of action Hanoi might choose to pursue. Since then, they have consistently and accurately reported on the particular course which Hanoi has in fact followed.

6. At the risk of unnecessary repetition, in defense of my colleagues I feel obliged to stress once again that at no time have they done anything but try to describe the situation and predict its near-term evolution as best they were able in light of the information and evidence available. At all times they have been writing for the policy-makers faced with the urgent need to make immediate decisions, and not for the record or the history books.

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George A. Carver, Jr.
Deputy for National Intelligence Officers

Attachments

DCI Briefing for 17 April WSAG Meeting, 17 April 1975

TOP SECRET SENSITIVE

Memorandum - Vietnam, 17 April 1975

Memorandum - Assessment of the Military Situation and Prospects for South Vietnam, 4 April 1975

cc: DDCI w/attachments

ER w/attachments

NIO/SSEA w/attachments

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Orig - Addse w/atts

cys - as indicated w/atts

- VIETNAM SURVEY file w/atts
1 - GAC Chrono w/~~full~~ atts
1 - RI w/o atts

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